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ABSTRACT

National evaluations of quality aspects of vocational training programs (VTPs) in five European countries--Belgium, Germany, France, Greece, and Portugal--were reviewed to determine how VTP quality is currently being evaluated and identify a more coherent approach to evaluating VTPs. Special attention was paid to how existing evaluation studies consider relationships between the contents, kinds, and methods of vocational training and trainees' vocational perspectives and to how the needs of trainees in different target groups are represented in the design of VTPs. The CIPP (context, input, process, product) model of evaluation developed by Stufflebeam and associates was used to systematize the methodological approaches of the studies examined. In terms of methods, the evaluation studies reviewed varied considerably. Hardly any studies examined the links between the context, process, and product of VTPs, although many studies focused on a single element from the cycle. It was recommended that a coherent approach to evaluating VTPs be devised that gives consideration to both process-oriented and product-oriented indicators of quality. The need for greater convergence between the debates on training policy and labor market policy was also emphasized. (Contains 73 references.) (MN)

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CEDEFOP Document

Evaluation of quality aspects in vocational training programmes

Synthesis report

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

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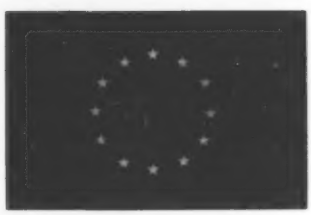

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Evaluation of quality aspects in vocational training programmes

Synthesis report

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Foreword

In its project on "Quality in VET", CEDEFOP commissioned the present study, which shows how evaluations of quality aspects of vocational training programmes are made.

It is a study which emanates from and deepens the reflection of the OAED/CEDEFOP Conference on the Evaluation of European Training, Employment and Human Resource Programmes, held on 30 November and 1 December 1995 in Athens. It is a meta-analysis of evaluation studies of VET programmes in five European countries with special emphasis on quality.

Aware that quality is a constant aim and that even the most sophisticated evaluations are not perfect, we decided to focus on quality and evaluations and examine their interrelations in an effort to draw conclusions and to come forward with suggestions for a more coherent approach in the training field. A rather difficult task, especially when it refers not only to quality within the training process itself but also to its relations to labour market policies.

Besides, an evaluation is never neutral. Evaluating public (and private) training programmes serves different purposes and may have important consequences for all involved. But the recent proliferation of training programmes - in an effort to adapt the work force to technological and economic change and to combat unemployment - prompts us to reflect on their effectiveness and on their possible improvement. In other words, evaluation steps in with its many interdisciplinary issues concerning employment, vocational training and social policies.

Based on the experiences of previous evaluations made in Germany, Belgium, Greece, France and Portugal as reported in the national studies conducted by the research teams mentioned in point 1.3 of this publication, Professor Dr. Erwin Seyfried, who is the scientific coordinator of this exercise, was able to structure the many different kinds of information provided into a coherent whole and to formulate suggestions for improving upon previous research on evaluations.

We wish to thank him as well as the other research participants for their invaluable work of locating and analysing evaluation documents which were often considered confidential and even compromising.

Tina Bertzeletou
Project coordinator

Stavros Stavrou
Deputy Director

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1 Introduction

The present study is part of CEDEFOP's work programme on quality issues of vocational education and training, which was launched after the corresponding Resolution of the European Council in December 1994.

1.1 Objective of the study

The objective of the present study was to analyse and to compare in a European frame work if and to what degree the evaluation of quality aspects in vocational training programmes (VTP) has been taken into consideration by relevant evaluation studies so far. In the context of this study, the quality of vocational training programmes is primarily seen in relation to the needs of the target groups in question as well as in relation to their employment prospects after completion of the training and the quality of the jobs obtained.

National studies were carried out in Belgium, Germany, Greece, France and Portugal. In the countries involved different approaches have been developed to tackle this question. There is no consistent methodology concerning the evaluation of VTP and the studies which have been reviewed have even less in common concerning the evaluation quality aspects. Therefore the present synthesis is more a mosaic than a coherent picture, the report stresses contradictional developments but nevertheless it is able to summarise and to synthesise the findings and to identify some common elements on the European level.

In particular this study deals with the relationships between the contents, kinds and methods of vocational training on the one hand and the employment perspectives of the trainees on the other. The main questions of the study have been: have such relationships been examined so far through evaluation studies carried out in the countries included? What are the methodological approaches used to analyse such relationships? What can be said about the quality of the methodological approaches which had been used in existing evaluations and their possible usefulness in a European framework? Which basic data is needed to come to valid statements concerning the relation between quality issues in vocational training and employment perspectives? In general, the important issue in the framework of this study is dealing with the question, if and to what degree the dynamic relationship between vocational training programmes and employment is reflected in existing evaluation studies.

A second field of investigation in this study tackles the question, how the needs of trainees belonging to different target groups are represented in the design of vocational training programmes. In this context needs are defined in a triple way. A first understanding is about the social starting conditions of the target group, which must be reflected in the overall design of training programmes in order to reach the envisaged target group: does a training programme for single-parent adults, for example, include

additional child care support? The importance of such specific requirements for different target groups is obvious, but should it also be evaluated in a scientific way? A second meaning of needs relates to the question of whether the contents and methods of the training courses are in accordance with the previous knowledge of the target groups envisaged. The third notion of needs again deals with employment prospects: how far does the training programme reflect a realistic perspective concerning employment after completion of the training?

1.2 Methodological approach

The research undertaken in the framework of this study focused on a close review and a critical analysis of evaluation studies which had been available in the countries included. The study is thus a kind of meta-analysis of sources dealing with the examination of relationships between vocational training programmes and employment. According to the following illustration the meta-analysis will concern evaluation studies which can be located in the angle between the needs of the trainees, the quality of vocational training programmes and the employment prospects of the trainees:

Table 1: Analysis of evaluation studies

Quality of vocational training programmes
Needs of trainees
Employment perspectives
- targeting of programmes
- identification of needs
- kind and type of training
- consideration of employment perspectives
- kind and type of employment
- quality of employment

Each national expert had to analyse evaluation studies in his/her country and to proove which relationships inside this angle have been examined so far. But not only the results of the analysed evaluation studies were interesting in the framework of this research project, furthermore the present study was interested in the methodological approaches which have been used to analyse quality aspects of vocational training programmes and their effects on employment so far in the countries involved.

1.2.1 Consideration of the needs of the trainees

Whereas the relationship between vocational training and employment deals with the question if and how far the training industry serves the needs of the labour-markets, this subject is about the needs of the participants in training programmes. The central question is, how far are the needs of the trainees taken into consideration and which methods are used to reflect their starting conditions in the design and in the implementation of training courses. The main questions to investigate in this field were:

- Which instruments are used in the different countries to ensure that the trainees, needs are included in the design and in the practical implementation of vocational training programmes? Have these instruments ever been assessed?
- In which fields, relevant for the implementation of training according to the specific needs of different target groups (for example: quality of trainers; quality of technical equipment; relationship between theory, practice and work experience; appropriateness of training methods), have assessment studies been carried out?
- Are there any evaluation studies which determined the consideration of the needs of trainees in training programmes? Did evaluation studies deal with the question of whether trainees needs are met by the programmes?
- Are there any evaluation studies dealing with the forecasting of employment needs for the target groups envisaged?

1.2.2 Consideration of employment prospects in training programmes

Employment prospects of trainees can be seen as one of the most crucial quality issues of vocational training programmes. That is why the research primarily had to analyse how employment prospects of (former) trainees are considered in the design of training programmes. The questions which had been examined can be listed as followed:

- Is there any evaluation of employment prospects by the responsible bodies either on national, regional or local levels or through the promoters of vocational training before establishing (new) training programmes (ex-ante evaluations)?
- Is there any institutionalised cooperation between training bodies, employers, organisations and trade unions on national, regional or local level which tend to strengthen the links between training and employment? Are there evaluation studies examining the effects of the different kinds of cooperation on the quality of training as well as on the employment prospects of trainees?
- Is there any evaluation of outcome in terms of employment prospects of the (former) trainees through the training bodies or other relevant organisations?

1.2.3 Consideration of quality aspects of employment

If analysing the relationship between training programmes and employment the main focus of evaluation studies often is on the question whether the trainees got a job or if they remained unemployed. The quality aspects of employment often are neglected. The present study therefore examined the methods used in each of the countries involved to include quality issues of employment when evaluating the outcome of training programmes. The main questions analysed were:

- Which methods and criteria have been developed so far in evaluation studies on employment effects of vocational training programmes, to include quality aspects of the employment posts which have been reached by former trainees?
- Are there evaluations studies examining the correspondence between the level of qualifications obtained by the trainees and the level of qualification afforded by their present job?
- Are there evaluations considering the type of employment and the type of contract (part-time, full-time, short-term, seasonal, time-limited, unlimited, self-employment) of former trainees when evaluating the employment effects of training programmes?
- Has the type and the importance of payment conditions (combination with subsidies) been taken into consideration when evaluating the employment effects of training programmes?
- What are the time-limits within which the effects between training and employment have been examined? Have there been long-term follow-up studies carried out?

1.2.4 Areas of investigation

Given the complexity of the subject the area of investigation had to be limited. The following priorities were set as regards to target groups and according to the type of training. Following the factual availability of evaluation studies in the countries included there was, however, some reshaping of the scope of the research project during the process of work.

The study is focused on the analysis of evaluations of vocational training programmes for the unemployed, for people threatened by unemployment, for people with low and insufficient qualifications, for unskilled target groups and various disadvantaged populations. This is because many human resource programmes in favour of these target groups are financed through European channels, mainly the European Social Fund but also for example the Community Initiatives Employment and ADAPT. The evaluation of these programmes is a requirement which comes along with European funding and that is why evaluations studies of these programmes are available in each of the countries involved.

Studies on continuous training programmes have been included because they are addressing mainly skilled workers, and thus represent a quite different group with different needs to those mentioned previously. The analysis of evaluations of in-house training of large companies has been taken into consideration because of the fact that such programmes often are closely tailored to the needs of the companies' population. Therefore they can be seen as ideal cases to analyse how the preconditions from the trainees' sides are reflected in the design of training and are evaluated in relevant studies. Furthermore in-house training in large companies does have a genuine interest in the question of transfer of what has been learned during the training into the work situation. Evaluation studies concerning the transfer problem contain information about the relations between the contents and methods of training and its effects in the employment situation.

1.3 Organisation of work

The study was carried out with the same methodological approach in each of the countries involved. The research teams consisted of:

Belgium	Prof. Mateo Alaluf Esteban Martinez Adinda Vanheerswynghels Free University of Brussels
Germany	Prof. Dr. Erwin Seyfried Research Unit for Vocational Training, the Labour-market and Evaluation at FHVR Berlin
Greece	Dr. Dimitris Chassapis Aristotelian University Thessaloniki
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Portugal	Dr. Emilia Andrade Universidade Nova de Lisboa

* * *

I would like to thank all these contributors to the synthesis report. Special thanks are addressed to Tina Bertzeletou from CEDEFOP who brought the different teams together and coordinated the discussions amongst them.

Berlin, April 1998
Erwin Seyfried

2. Evaluation of vocational training programmes: context, objectives and functions

Evaluation of training systems, programmes or courses tends to be a demand of a social, institutional or international nature (Figari, 1994). The demand of a social nature became stronger with the participation in training of social partners and other non-traditional actors. Evaluation is also a growing institutional demand, since the decision-makers need to understand the processes, but also to control and act upon the effects of their guidelines. Evaluation is still an international demand given the Community involvement in the financing of training in the EU Member States. The re-negotiating of funds, the continuity or institutionalisation of programmes are often grounded or justified with results and conclusions of the external or internal evaluations that were made.

2.1 Different interests - different concepts

The multi-interest character of all these demands influences the conditions and the theoretical framework of evaluation and are a relevant condition of its functions and objectives. The functions and objectives of evaluation are structuring points that influence every decision related to each evaluation exercise - the data to be collected and analysed, the actors to be involved, the methodology to be used or the use to be given to results, conclusions and recommendations. Any evaluation model depends on and is related to the context in which it is designed and where it is applied, and has the purposes that stakeholders decide to evaluation - each evaluate exercise 'obeys' pre-defined objectives and builds (implicit or explicitly) its own rationality. Maybe there is a danger to avoid: the danger of turning evaluation into a 'mechanism of information that allows us to discover only what was foreseen *a priori*' as Planas (1994: 36) stated.

Authors such as Stufflebeam and Patton recognise another important dimension to evaluation - the integration of learning: 'The evaluation of programmes is done to support decisions, clarify options, reduce uncertainty and produce information about the programmes and the politics within the contextual boundaries of time, place, values and politics' (Patton, 1989: 14). Stufflebeam stated that 'the most important purpose of evaluation is not to prove, but to improve' (1988: 151) - which means that if evaluation is done to support decisions, then these should be taken according to the improvements to be made in the programme. The processes of learning related to the quality of training can be stimulated with evaluation. Supporting the actors (both those involved in the processes of decision or those are connected to practice) in the diagnosis of problems and needs, evaluation can help to conceive and build the 'guidelines', to the change and influence the processes of change and innovation. Change that occur inside a collective learning process are able to build a new social practice (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). In this way, evaluation can speed up the processes of learning by bearing out to what (without it) could be neglected or misunderstood: 'the value of evaluation is not limited to the destiny of a programme to be studied ... since it clarifies

the phenomena and so can have a deep influence in the way the problem is understood and in the form of future programmes' (Cronbach, 1980: 139).

In the Portuguese context, for example, the need to integrate the dimension of 'collective learning' in evaluation is stressed, among others, by Rodrigues 'the function of evaluation in Portugal can be much more than a way of controlling efficiency and efficacy of the allocation of financial resources, even if this is very important'. Evaluation can be a 'support to the capacity of learning and of innovation' (1993: 7). The effects of evaluation, as a learning process, will be produced at different levels: in the production of information, in the support to negotiation and to the institutional and cultural change of the actors involved in the development of the programme. Stern stresses the importance of participative and collaborative evaluation (1992). The level of participation of the actors and their capacity for negotiation depends on knowledge, and knowledge can be produced in the evaluative process producing *enlightenment and empowerment*. It is this empowerment of actors through knowledge that develops their capacity to negotiate and makes them capable of changing their practices. This can happen when evaluation is integrated in a process of personal and organisational development. Which means that evaluation should be closely related to the decision-making process at every level.

Evaluation should not be understood as an activity that only concerns those who '*order*' it or those who do it, where the actors of the evaluated object are eventually seen as one of the audiences or just a resource of information. There is a strong relationship between the participation of the different stakeholders in the evaluation activities and the acceptance or recognition of the value and importance of the results. The actors who participate in evaluation are in better position to implement any changes suggested by the activities and results of evaluation, i.e. of integrating evaluation in the practices in the direction of change and in the improvement of training.

The aims of evaluation, (whose object is not students' knowledge) are mainly developed around the following axes: as an instrument to support decisions (Stufflebeam), as a process that fosters social learning and supports innovation (Rodrigues, 1992); as a process that, involving negotiation and the participation of the social actors, leads to their empowerment (Guba, 1990; Stern, 1992). Evaluation is designed and developed according to needs and objectives, concerns, interests and values. We adopt the criteria that we think are the most suited to the objectives we want to reach. We choose models and methods according to the aims to be attained or to the decisions to be taken.

2.2 The context for 'valuation'[1]

Those who conduct evaluation studies and those who participate in the training programme being evaluated have brought and cannot avoid bringing to the evaluation their personal sets of values. The context of valuation comprises the basic values of the

[1] The term valuation is used to stress the existence and the appliance of values in the process of evaluation.

evaluation, including all the biases, values, attitudes and pressures from which it arises. The contexts of valuation is characterised by complexity and variation according to the case but may be roughly distinguished into three groups:

- contexts of valuation providing an unconditional service to the agencies which have a major control over the allocation of training resources. The evaluation studies adopt the values of those holding office and offer information which will help them to accomplish their policy objectives. These studies essentially provide management consultation and their criterion of success is client satisfaction. Their approaches and methods must therefore to be credible to the policy-makers and are not laid open to public criticism. These evaluation studies are actually owned by the training bureaucracy which make use of their results according to its interests. That is why these evaluation studies are usually not published or widely accessed;

- contexts of valuation providing a conditional service to the agencies which have major control over the allocation of training resources. These studies offer external validation of policy in exchange for compliance with their recommendations. Their values are derived from the perception that the evaluation study groups hold about institutional and social obligations of the training bureaucracy. These studies essentially provide expert advice. Their approaches and methods must therefore yield scientific proofs, because their power reference is the academic research community and their reports are usually published in specialised journals;

- contexts of valuation providing an information service to anybody concerned about the characteristics of a training programme. The evaluation studies adopting such a context they respect value pluralism and seek to represent a range of interest in their issue formulation. Their basic values are derived from the respect to the right of the concerned to be informed. The main evaluative activity adopted is the collection of definitions of, and reactions to, the training programme. The criterion of success of these evaluation studies is the range of the audience served.

The outlined contexts of valuation are, of course, ideal types and many evaluation studies contain elements of more than one of them. The danger also of using such value-laden words to describe them is recognised. However it may to be a useful distinction between on the one hand, the evaluation of a training programme by-objectives model and on the other hand the goal-free evaluation approaches.

2.3 Evaluation of quality aspects

Training can be viewed as a form of social engineering for rectifying deficiencies and therefore as a process of producing certain desired changes in the behaviour of trainees. On the other hand it can be viewed as a form of personal professional development and therefore as a process of change which is self-regulating and autonomous and which involves enabling, fostering and providing opportunities for the professional support and promotion of trainees.

The task of evaluation according to the first view is necessarily to assess the effectiveness of what has been or is done to the trainees in the light of the changes in behaviour which are required to remedy the perceived defects. Evaluation according to the second view is the concomitant of the professional development of trainees adopting therefore the perspective of the trainees in assessing training activities from the standpoint of their training needs and professional rights. The evaluation task is mainly concerned with process rather than product criteria since it seeks to assess training activities in the light of norms of actions referred to by educational concepts.

When considering the evaluation of quality of training we have to be aware that quality is a multi-dimensional concept. Berghe (1996: 5) tries to organise some of the most important viewpoints and perceptions to quality:

- quality as excellence, as something special
- product-oriented quality (quality can be measured)
- quality of as the fulfilment of customer expectations
- process-oriented quality (quality is conformance with specifications)
- price/benefit-oriented quality (the value approach).

In its major sense the quality of training should relate to the process of development of the trainee, to the process that makes him able to acquire and develop knowledge and competencies allowing him to answer the diversity of challenges along life. Aubégny (1989) considers that the only criteria of institutional evaluation is the impact that training has on the development of the trainees.

The evaluation of quality demands a systemic approach that helps to analyse deeply the relationship between politics, providers of training, social partners and the trainees, between their needs, interests and objectives. The approaches to quality tend to consider different moments and axes in its construction and analysis (Le Boterf, 1992; Dupouey, 1991; Berghe, 1995) - the moment of definition of policies, conception and development of the training and the application of competencies, according to Le Boterf or the quality of design and the quality of conformance, according to Berghe. The quality of training should be evaluated according to national/general but also according to local criteria. The general/national criteria would allow the comparability between training projects that emerged from the same guidelines, but on the other side the local criteria would allow the analysis of the training project in its own context. So training would be seen in the internal, as well as in its external context.

3. Models for the evaluation of vocational training programmes (VTP)

In the following chapter we shall make an initial presentation of a number of different types of evaluation as well as defining their significances with regard to the evaluation of vocational training programmes (VTP). From among the innumerable possible and attempted classifications of the various kinds, forms and types of evaluations, we shall be dealing only with those which are relevant for the evaluation of the qualitative aspects of vocational training in the context of the CEDEFOP project.

From a temporal perspective we can start by differentiating between evaluations which are orientated towards the future, the present or the past of a given programme. Evaluations relating to the future course of a programme and its possible results are termed ex-ante evaluations. Evaluations which focus on the course of a vocational training programme are called on-going, in-progress or process-orientated evaluations. Evaluations which examine an already completed programme with regard to its effects are known as ex post evaluations. This division of the evaluations into three groups from a temporal perspective is of use inasmuch as it determines the discourse at European level. Hence the evaluations of the Structural Funds interventions in the Member States follow this pattern.

From a theoretical point of view the following explanatory presentation takes the CIPP model developed by Stufflebeam et al (1971) as a point of reference. In the CIPP-model each letter represents a different type of evaluation: C stands for context, I for input, the first P for process and the second P for product. Considered methodologically however the CIPP model is just one variant among many; the organising principle of the model is the use of evaluations to provide contributions towards practical decision-making, which is why it is also known as a decision-oriented model. The advantage of this model for our purposes is to be found in the fact that it covers the various temporal stages of the evaluation.

3.1 Ex-ante evaluation

The aim of the ex-ante evaluation is to determine the framework or initial conditions of a programme and to assess the objectives which are achievable with the resources envisaged; according to the CIPP model this entails the analysis of 'context' and 'input': what are the framework conditions under which the programme is to take place? What input is necessary in order to achieve a given goal?

At the same time the ex-ante evaluation can also formulate the indicators through which a programme's effects can be examined after completion (ex post). Freeman and Solomon (1984) speak in the context of this function of ex ante evaluations of 'evaluability assessment'. In order to do justice to this function, the programme objectives must be quantified and/or operationalised into measurable indicators during

the course of the ex-ante evaluation. In the same way the extent of the resources required for the achievement of the programme objectives must be determined. If the level of resources has already been determined, the possibilities for the achievement of programme objectives must of course be defined in their dependence on the available resources. In the context of the evaluability assessment there should also be some evaluation of the possibilities of collating the basic data required for the measurement and assessment of the effects of a given programme.

Also directed towards the future are the so-called 'feasibility studies'. These are indepth, specified ex ante evaluations: context and input are related to each other in a model way in a controlled setting and possible results extrapolated. This usually involves playing through and comparing different variants or scenarios.

3.2 Process-orientated evaluation

With regard to the evaluation of the course of a programme, referred to in the CIPP model as the accompanying examination of the 'process', it is also possible to differentiate between a number of methods and types of evaluation.

Generally speaking, process-orientated evaluation follows the course of a programme, i.e. it mostly takes place in parallel to the enactment of the vocational training programme but can of course focus on widely differing aspects, depending on the questions formulated. Process-orientated evaluations are interested in the internal functionings of a certain programme, in particular the procedures, the modalities, the conflicts and comprises which are happening when a programme is implemented. All these conditions for implementation are seen as influencing the result. The whole process is seen as a means to achieve quality, and a definition of quality can only be the result of negotiations between the actors involved. Questions can for example be directed towards the documenting of bottlenecks and conflicts in the course of the programme, or equally be concentrated on the results achieved or relate to the process as a whole; in the latter case we then speak of systems evaluation.

In as much as the insights gained from the process-orientated evaluation are repeatedly communicated to the responsible programme agents in the ongoing programme and specific evaluation insights are then taken into consideration subsequently to this feedback process in the continuation of the programme, we then speak of formative evaluation. This type of accompanying, formative evaluation does not necessarily depend on the presence of an evaluator external to the programme enactment, but can also be carried out by the programme agents themselves. This is known as action research.

In the context of the evaluation of European programmes, formative evaluations are something of a rarity. Programme-accompanying, on-going evaluations have merely a

summative function here, i.e. identifying the effects of certain conditions and process variables on the subsequent achievement of programme objectives.

3.3 Ex post evaluation

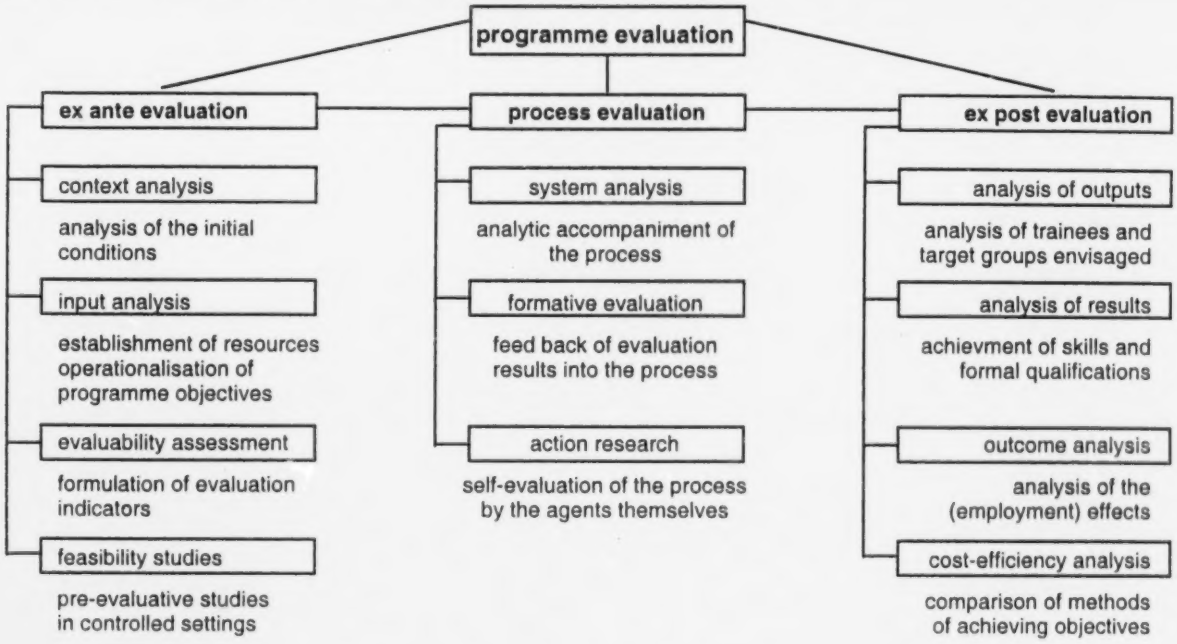
The term ex post evaluation refers to the analysis of the effects of a completed programme, known in the pedagogical tradition of Stufflebeam's CIPP model as the 'product' or also as the 'output' in systems theory approaches. The evaluation of the results achieved is based on the criteria of the programme's initial or starting conditions (context), the originally formulated objectives (target achievement analysis) as well as possible (intentional or unintentional) side effects produced by the programme. Ex post evaluations are interested in the results of VET programmes making comparisons between objectives and achievements. In this case the process which leads to the results is considered as a black box. Output-related evaluations examine the adequacy and the effectiveness of a certain programme against an a priori definition of different quality aspects which can be observed and measured using corresponding indicators. In addition it is also possible to carry out cost-efficiency analyses based on ex post evaluations which establish the effects of a programme. Such analyses involve not only a comparison of the original objectives and the results actually achieved, but also a comparison of the various methods of goal achievement. This comparison is designed to identify which of the methods used represents the best or most cost-efficient way of achieving the envisaged objectives.

Ex post evaluations are also used to examine the programme as a whole, in order to gain information and a value basis for longer-range decisions about whether the programme should be continued, altered or even terminated. Does the input need to be increased, should the programme objectives be modified or the methods altered? Thus from the point of view of their enactment, ex post evaluations are retrospective assessments whilst from the point of view of their conclusions they are connected to the future. According to their intention, i.e. in as much as their insights are used, they entail effects on the future, or rather on the course of future programmes. In this, programme-related sense, ex post evaluations also fulfil a formative function on a meta-level, i.e. on the level of the programmes' policy cycle.

Longer-term ex post evaluations in particular pursue the objective of documenting this and other kinds of programme effects beyond their originally formulated objectives, including programme effects in other areas of activity and areas of life. In this context we use the term impact analyses.

The following overview contains a summary of the typology of evaluations developed above.

Table 2: Typology of Evaluations



According to the different types and aspects of ex post evaluations the main issues relevant for such evaluations can be summarised as following:

- The question about **adequacy** is asking whether a certain policy and its objectives are corresponding appropriately (appropriateness) to the social problem or the needs which are to be tackled with this policy.
- The question about **coherence** of the programme is asking whether the means and the resources of a certain policy or programme are coherent with the objectives envisaged?
- The question about **conformity** is asking whether the objectives and the enactment of a certain policy is corresponding to certain (pre-determined) quality standards.
- The question about **effectiveness** is asking what the effects of the programme are, seen in relation to the objectives envisaged.
- The question about **efficiency** is analysing the relationship between (financial) means and resources at the one hand and the effects of the programme on the other hand (cost-effectiveness)
- The question about the **impact** of the programme is asking about (indirect) effects of the programme relating to the social environment which are not explicitly comprised in the objectives.

4. Evaluation of vocational training programmes: The state of the art in the countries involved

In the following chapter we give an overview about the culture of evaluation in vocational training programmes for each of the countries involved in this study. It will be documented the main types and focus of evaluations to be found and the methodology which has been used in the reviewed evaluations studies.

4.1 Belgium

Apart from the evaluations of the European Structural Funds interventions there is hardly a tradition of evaluations in vocational training programmes in Belgium. Some activities, developed jointly by the social partners, have been subject of external evaluations. If there is any interest into the training programme at all, the main objects of examination are the organisation, the implementation process, the promoters, the trainers and the trainees. The content of VET programmes has never been the subject of such evaluations, it is seen as a 'black box'. Many evaluations preferably stick to quantitative criteria whereas more qualitative criteria referring to the quality of training should be taken into consideration.

In recent years the evaluation of VET programmes has become a remarkable practice, but only because of the requirements of the Community programmes. However, quality issues are rarely integrated into the evaluation exercises. A meta-evaluation on the ESF evaluations in Belgium, done by Delcourt (1993), stressed the weaknesses of the available statistical data concerning the main target groups of vocational training programmes. The other, few evaluations in the field of VET programmes are not very systematic either. If a vocational training programme is evaluated at all, the main focus is on products or outcome: How many electricians, joiners or book-keepers have been trained? The micro-economic evaluations are mainly interested in variables relating to individual characteristics of the participants (age, gender, length of unemployment, disability, ethnic minority) determining the placement rates into employment. Technically they mainly use descriptive statistics and sometimes probabilistic models for the estimation of placement rates after the completion of VET programmes.

The more the training sectors expands, the less its evaluation is developing, apart from the growing self-evaluations of projects. There are internal investigations of bigger training organisations going on, but the outcomes are kept confidential and the existing reports are not distributed. In principal the results of ex ante as well as of ex post evaluations are rarely taken into consideration when designing new programmes or politics.

4.2 Germany

In principle all the types of evaluations introduced in the previous chapter are utilised in the evaluation of vocational training programme. Especially process-orientated evaluations applying quantitative variables like the demographic data of participants are traditionally of great importance. Only relatively rare process-orientated studies contain data reflecting the personal situation of the trainees. Nevertheless, studies into the variables influencing the process of vocational training programmes have gained significance in Germany in recent years, particularly in the context of the discussions on quality assurance and quality management in training organisations. Furthermore a systematic survey of trainees with regard to their subjective evaluation of the learning process has meanwhile become almost standard among VTPs. However, there must of course be a differentiation between using surveys of this type as feedback for the direct, practical course of the training or carrying them out in the context of scientific programme evaluations. Altogether, there are hardly any input variables, whether determined by the VTP, influenced by the trainees or dependent on the situative conditions of the training, which have not been examined in the evaluation of process-orientated evaluations in Germany. Furthermore there is a growing tendency to include the trainees subjective opinions as a resource for data collation and as an additional indicator for the quality of VTPs.

The placement rates for the participants of all publicly funded programmes for basic and further vocational training in Germany is regularly documented by the Federal Institute for Labour in the context of its labour-market statistics. This procedure also documents the sectors and the branches of the economy in which VTP participants have found employment. Those responsible for training and labour-market policies take the employment rates as the main criteria for success of VTPs. The fixation on placement rates dates from the origins of German labour-market policy (statistics) in the late sixties, when structural unemployment was practically unknown, and the VTPs which where carried out let to vocational advancement for 90% of the participants.

Because these general, quantitative data on the effects of VTPs allow relatively few practically-oriented conclusions to be drawn regarding the design of VTP, many ex post studies have also begun including other, qualitative data on the (employment) situation of the participants. This is true for example of the follow-up surveys carried out by the large vocational training centres in Germany, as well as of the ex post evaluations following on from the European Social Fund interventions. It must be added that more recent follow-up studies of VTPs have not been content to confine themselves to quantitative methods of data collation on the whereabouts of the participants, but also make use of qualitative survey instruments in order to reconstruct VTP participants' biographical routes into employment or, as the case may be, into unemployment.

The meta-analysis of evaluations studies carried out in Germany clearly illustrated that there is no lack of relevant research in relation to overall programme cycles. Whilst this statement should only be applied with caution to the ex ante phase, it is otherwise true

for every stage of the evaluation process and both with regard to the quantitative as well as to the qualitative data, whereby the latter serve less as success criteria than to provide the basis from which to deduce important indicators for the needs-orientated modification of VTPs.

It must however be said that the fields of evaluation of vocational training programmes and of labour-market policies remain distinctly isolated from each other. The former is primarily orientated towards the training process, whereas for labour-market policy evaluations it is the integration into employment which enjoys pride of place. Process-orientated evaluation of VTPs is largely excluded from labour-market policy ex post evaluations and vice versa. In recent years, however, the evaluations of EU Structural Funds activities concerning the development of human resources have been an important catalyst for bringing together both research strands.

4.3 Greece

Until the mid-1980s the volume of vocational training directly oriented to the labour-market and its public funding remained essentially marginal and therefore the question of any formal evaluation of their effectiveness or quality had never been raised. From that time onwards and particularly during the last decade this state of affairs changed radically by a considerable expansion of the vocational training activities, fostered by a considerable funding through the Greek State authorities and the European Structural Funds.[2] This time, however, vocational training was not organised in response to any strictly defined labour-market needs but in reaction to the growing rates of actual unemployment and to the strong demand for new additional skills, both of which had been the result of the structural, technological, and organisational transformations which the Greek economy has been undergoing since then.

In this context the question of quality and effectiveness of training has begun to be widely discussed and the evaluation of VTPs have recently gained importance within the private and public training sector and particularly among the public authorities concerned. Formal evaluation studies into VTPs have therefore a quite recent history in Greece. There is only a limited number of evaluation reports available, since many of them are thought of as confidential documents for the internal use of the institution concerned only. The conceptual approaches and the methodologies which have been adopted in evaluations are described quite briefly or not at all. Against this background the current state of the art in Greece concerning the evaluation of VTPs is reflected only through a small number of available studies which have been reviewed.

The Greek Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) can be considered as the leading provider of vocational training for unemployed persons or insufficiently qualified people. The OAED has not established any formal system for the evaluation of its

[2] The rate and amount of this expansion are being illustrated by the increase of the total expenditure for contiuing vocational training in Greece from 0.04% of the GNP in 1987 to 0.24% in 1991 (OECD, Employment Outlook 1992, Paris 1992).

training programmes but it occasionally conducts ex post summative evaluation studies. This study entails an evaluation of the objectives of the programmes embedded in the relevant socio-economic context (context and input evaluation), an evaluation of the key implementation elements (process-orientated evaluation) and an evaluation of the outcomes (product-orientated and impact evaluation) of the vocational training programmes under consideration.

In methodological terms concerning context the OAED evaluation is based on the available statistical data concerning the main aspects of employment and unemployment. The analysis of the training process consists of a descriptive statistical analysis of the subjective assessments made by main actors, i.e. the trainees, trainer, training managers, and key actors on the decision making level. A third cluster of evaluation activities is focused on data concerning the employment status of the former trainees, their subjective assessments of the overall contribution of the training they have participated in to their employability. This data is completed by subjective assessments of company representatives employing the former trainees. Furthermore the impact evaluation of the training programme consists of an econometric analysis using linear multiple regression models, in order to assess the relative importance of factors that are determining the effectiveness of the VTPs in question (OAED evaluations).

The evaluation studies launched by other major providers of vocational training, too, mostly have adopted an ongoing concept, analysing the key input, the process and the outcome factors of the training programmes carried out, and it is striking, that methodologically they are based quite often on qualitative analysis of subjective assessments made by trainees, former trainees, trainers, training managers and other relevant actors. Furthermore it is noteworthy that the evaluation of inhouse training of a big Greek company uses quasi-experimental approaches to analyse the transfer of the skills acquired by the training into the workplace.

4.4 France

In France the systematic evaluation of the economical and social policies is a recent development. Evaluation is becoming an integral part of public affairs. This is the result of an interministerial exercise in the beginning of the 1990s which did not affect vocational training policies only but included the whole public sector. In this framework evaluation has been defined as a permanent element of pubic policies: ... 'evaluation of a public policy aims to analyse if the administrative, juridical and financial means which have been provided for this policy have lead to the achievement of the expected effects' (*Conseil scientifique de l'Evaluation*, 1991). In France the decentralisation of vocational training policies which started in 1993 was a push forward for evaluation exercises, as the corresponding law foresaw an evaluation of the decentralised exercises.

There is no consistent methodology concerning the evaluation of VET programmes in France and the studies which have been reviewed in the framework of CEDEFOP research have even less in common concerning the evaluation of quality aspects. Concerning the main focus and the methodology used, two different types of evaluation can be found in France:

- a first type, qualified as product-orientated evaluations, is interested primarily in the results of VET programmes making comparisons between objectives and achievements. In this case the process which leads to the results is considered as a black box. These output-related evaluations examine the adequacy and the effectiveness of a certain programme against an a priori definition of different quality aspects which can be observed and measured using corresponding indicators.

- a second type of evaluation, which can be qualified as process-orientated, is interested in the internal functionings of a certain programme, in particular the procedures, the modalities, the conflicts and comprises which are happening when a programme is implemented. All these conditions for implementation are seen as influencing the result. The whole process is seen as a means to achieve quality, and a definition of quality can only be the result of negotiations between the actors involved.

In France the development of process-oriented evaluations is forced by the distribution of guides of good practice often used as *'cahiers de charge'*, which have been elaborated at national level with the aid of training experts. Some evaluations sought to prove if these *cahiers de charge* had been applied by the training organisations. Most of the French evaluation reports do not deal with the analysis of cost-effectiveness issues.

More recent developments are directed to goal-free evaluations (according to Mr Scriven), focusing on questions like the internal and external coherence of the programme as well as its intended and non-intended results. Furthermore there is a growing tendency for self-evaluations to be in parallel with the enactment of training courses carried out by many of the training promoters themselves. In training for disadvantaged groups self-evaluation is also seen as a means of empowerment of the trainees.

The scientific council has published guidelines for evaluations including conceptional and methodological proposals. According to this guidelines, two approaches to analyse quality aspects of vocational training programmes can be distinguished. The first approach consists in the elaboration of indicators to measure the quality of a certain programme, the second approach goes along with the piloting of quality aspects in training activities. Here, the main focus is on the question how quality is assured, and what are the means to assure quality.

Whereas in Belgium longitudinal studies have not been carried out yet in the field of vocational training and integration into employment, in France (Aucouturier, 1994) and Germany (Schömann 1994) there are already some experiences with this approach.

4.5 Portugal

The tradition of the evaluation of VTP programmes in Portugal is mainly outcome-orientated, it is connected to the evaluation of results of students and trainees. Since the 1960s, there has been a tradition of evaluating education and training at a macro-level: performance and efficacy/efficiency of educational systems are the main worries of political thinking. Evaluation of training programmes started later and it took longer to involve the research community, which is usually more interested in education than in training. At the micro-level, the object of evaluation has been the measurement of learning/knowledge. With the growing complexity of vocational training, programmes are no longer seen in their univocal relationship trainer/trainee but tend to create a logic of their own. Processes and results are seen as a part of the whole. The analysis of vocational training tend to be systemic, contextualised, in such a way the processes that occur inside the training systems are understood as an answer of the actors towards the different challenges they receive from the decision centres or from the local and regional socio-economical environment.

There is not yet a generalised culture of evaluation in Portugal. The integration of Portugal in the EU, a closer and systematic contact with different realities and points of view, and the need to answer to new demands started to make a difference in the evaluation of vocational training programmes. These new needs are related to the allocation of European funds and their application/use in the areas of education and training. The policies of employment and training together with education and scientific research allocated 90% of the ESF in Portugal. Since it is a contractual obligation to evaluate European programmes, this has led to an investment in the search of models and methodologies of evaluation.

In spite of that, the relationship between objectives / results (effectiveness) and costs/ benefits (efficiency) is still the organising concept in many of the available studies in Portugal. However, this approach makes it difficult to get information about the studies and the results obtained. The published studies are scarce and the access to written reports is really limited, regardless of whether the entities are private or public. Furthermore evaluation is limited by the nature of information available. Many studies are damaged by the absence of organised and systematised information. 'As a result of the difficulties faced, we consider to be urgent the conception and seting up of systems of information on the evaluation ...' to be made in the future. This statement was written in 1994 (Department of Statistics of the Ministry for Labour and Social Security), but recent studies still refer to the same problem.

5. Evaluations of quality aspects of vocational training programmes

This section is concerned with the evaluation of quality aspects in vocational training. In this context it is to examine whether the essential criteria for quality as defined by the present CEDEFOP study are met by the evaluation reports which have been reviewed in the countries involved and whose methodological standards have been applied to investigate the research questions concerned. By presenting the findings this chapter is following the different types of evaluations as described in chapter 3.

5.1 Evaluation of context

Context evaluations of VTPs should contain an examination of the target group and its starting conditions, of the resources available and the funding conditions which are available as well as of the objectives connected with the programme. In addition, as a result of context evaluations, the training programme objectives should to be operationalised and the (implicitly) evaluation criteria should be formulated.

In reality, context analyses of VTPs are mainly focused on a critical examination of the labour-market structure at the national levels and its recent changes. Mostly they are based on the available employment and unemployment statistical data that have been recorded by the national labour force surveys and by relevant studies. Some Greek studies contained reviews of the training policies and the programmes carried out in the European Member States by annotating comparative comments on their advantages and disadvantages as well as on their transferability in the given national context. Against this background an overall appraisal of the objectives and the intended outcomes of the envisaged training programme against the particular socio-economic context could be stated.

For Portugal it was considered that the needs of the trainees were rarely taken into account, because it is taken for granted that the needs of the trainees cannot be different from the needs of the labour-market. Thus the evaluation studies refer to the needs for training, which are defined at the macro-level, through sectoral or regional surveys and forecastings and/or according to the objectives of the European Funds. Whereas these findings are relevant for training programmes for unemployed people, a totally different approach was reported for the planning of continuous training activities inside a big and quality-certified enterprise. Here, the trainees needs are defined through interviews and questionnaires addressed to managers, workers and clients. Additionally there were internal auditors, to observe and evaluate the competences and the difficulties of the workers at their workplace. The results of such context evaluations are related to the strategic aims of the enterprise and integrated into the planning of training activities. In the decision on implementation of training activities the training department of the enterprise is a mediator between the managers, the requirements of the enterprise and the needs of the workers.

In general it must be seen as a weakness of context evaluations of VTPs that the characteristics of specific target groups are not analysed more precisely. Moreover, most of the context evaluations are not detailed enough to come to conclusions concerning the organisation of vocational training for the target groups in question. The overall design of vocational training programmes therefore normally does not reflect the social conditions of the target groups envisaged. A French synthesis report (Bouder et al., 1994) reviewed studies about young people, but none of the studies contained an explicit description of the special needs of young people with difficulties concerning vocational integration. Solid criteria for the identification of 'at risk' target groups are often lacking and examinations into the interface between training needs of young and risky people and the existing vocational training system have been neglected so far.

An ex ante evaluation carried out in the framework of the European Social Fund objective 3 (DULBEA - Joyeux, Meulders, Ruz Torres 1993) has shown that women, elderly and isolated people, people who care for other people, and those with low qualifications are particularly exposed to poverty. Given the difficulties these groups have in participating in VET programmes, another study (FTU - Huon, Pjetri 1993) proposed a broad approach to tackle social exclusion and poverty, which includes activities to promote vocational integration, councelling and motivation, as well as cultural and social integration (housing) activities.

Other context-orientated ex ante studies conducted in the framework of the ESF objective 4 used econometric models to anticipate the development of employment in 25 economical sectors (Fierens, Meulders, Sekkeat 1993). For some sectors the requirements concerning vocational training have been identified. In general, however, these projections were mainly theoretical and failed to be detailed enough to include conclusions on the perspectives and the design of VET programmes. The main weakness of such prospective appraisals is that sectoral employment forecasts are usually translated into numbers of posts but not into skills and competences.

5.2 Evaluation of input

Input analyses of VTPs are mostly restricted to overall appraisals of the objectives, intended outcomes and funding conditions of the training programmes in question, done against their particular contexts tending essentially to be a kind of training policy evaluations. Some studies with input analyses include an inquiry of the formal decision-making and planning processes determined by the organisational or the operational structures of the training providers considering them as crucial factors affecting the quality of its training offer under evaluation.

Most of the input analysis which was reviewed focused on the individual training programmes in question and did not employ any comparative approach. The factors inquired into included:

- adequacy of the training objectives and contents in relation to the requirement on the labour-market;
- appraisal of the effectiveness of the training plans, contents and methods in achieving the intended outcomes;
- experience and organisational status of the VTP promoter;
- suitability of the training materials and tools;
- quality of the premises, equipment and training conditions;
- effectiveness of management and supervision structures of the training.

It became obvious, that clearly defined quantitative input data are an important yardstick for the evaluation of the training process and its outcomes. Evaluations of public employment programmes done by the French audit office have shown, for example, that the majority of the beneficiaries in such programmes did not belong to the target groups which had been envisaged and prioritised by the programme. Similar findings are reported from Portugal. In consequence, proposals have been made to introduce some quota figures for certain target groups and thus supporting their proportional participation in VET.

Another input analysis has shown that the unemployed with children, if they are on their own, often experience difficulties with child care facilities when wishing to start up with training or employment. In this rare case, the design of the training courses took into consideration the special needs of the those trainees by establishing accompanying child care facilities.

However, the lack of commonly accepted and applied quality criteria as well as the variations in the evaluation methods employed by the relevant studies objectively limit their conclusions concerning the relevance of these input variables to the individual training programmes considered and do not allow any further contribution to the quality of training programmes at a general level.

In addition, since the analysis of input conditions of the training programmes are at most part of ex post evaluations their conclusions cannot be formatively utilised to the on going process of the training in question; they are generally of use for the reform of the next training programmes implemented which might, however, operate under quite different conditions.

5.3 Process-orientated evaluations

Process-orientated evaluations are not primarily interested in the results of the training activities but in the training system and the proceedings which are happening along the enactment of the training courses. A main question concerns the appropriateness of the process according to what has been formulated through context and/or input evaluations as demands or objectives.

During recent years it has become clear that vocational training is only one element in a development which should include motivation, orientation, assessment, training and assistance with job research and placement. Given the fact that the process of vocational integration thus consists of several steps it seems all the more necessary to evaluate the interaction between these different elements leading to vocational integration. Such process-orientated evaluations (will) not only lead to a better understanding of the relationship between the process and the results obtained, the existence of certain organisational modalities in the process of vocational integration must also be seen as criteria of quality.

The evaluation of the vocational training process itself relates to all the factors which can influence the course and the success of a training programme during the process of its implementation. In the following we differentiate between the conditions brought into the process by the trainees, the trainers and different elements of the vocational training process itself.

5.3.1 The conditions of the trainees

With regard to the conditions brought into the process by the trainees, the documentation of the following variables belongs largely to the standard repertoire of process-orientated evaluations:

- demographic data such as age, gender, marital status,
- data on the pre-programme educational achievements, i.e. initial school and vocational qualifications as well as - if applicable for the relevant target group - the length of vocational experience,
- the length of unemployment in programmes for the benefit of unemployed people,
- other relevant biographic data depending on the group the programme is tailored towards (e.g. single parents, the disabled, migrants, drug addicts, etc.),
- records of the refused applicants to training programmes, which normally are not available to evaluations but are worth considering.

Only rarely do studies on the input conditions at participant level also contain data relating to the participants' own motivation and interests, although there is no doubt in the relevant theoretical literature that participants motivation is a decisive condition for learning achievement. Analyses of access routes sometimes provide information on the trainees' motives for participation in a particular programme: hence it will probably make a big difference to the result if participation in a VTP can be traced back to the participant's own initiative or whether it comes about through lack of alternative or even in response to the demands from social allowance authorities. The relatively little attention paid to the subjective initial situation of VTP participants in evaluations could generally speaking be taken as an indication of the fact that participant's needs are of relatively little significance in the original design of training programmes.

5.3.2 The trainers qualifications

Of course the training personnel and its qualifications must be regarded as another important part of the training process and hence as one of the factors amenable to influence. If the evaluation of trainers and trainers behaviour nevertheless appears as an independent category this is due to the fact that this 'decision variable' has been accorded a great deal of significance in some relevant studies on the quality of the training process. The variables examined include:

- the trainer's formal qualifications and professional expertise,
- teaching skills and communication abilities (for example the trainer's capacity for empathy),
- the quantitative participant-trainer relation in the VTP,
- the trainer's experience with the target group as well as with the training methods used.

It has to be underlined that some of these variables can be examined according to objective data (formal qualifications) whereas other are examined on the basis of subjective assessments. Their validity is therefore heavily dependent on the methodology and the instrument applied for their collection and recording.

Most of the factors dealt with up till now which are brought into the training process as condition-related 'constant variables' from the participant or trainer side can either not be influenced at all (age, sex) or influenced only to a limited extent (qualifications of trainers) and must hence be considered as constants in VTP designs. However this does not apply to the process conditions of VTPs, for example the content and methods of the training courses, which can be seen therefore as 'decision variables'. These can be influenced by those responsible for the training, and are thus subject to variation and alteration.

5.3.3 Evaluation of situative process variables

Studies on the process on such decision variables of VTPs have gained in significance in recent years, particularly in the context of the discussions on quality assurance and quality management. The following factors have come under examination with regard to their effects on VTP results:

- relevance of the training contents in relation to the needs and the expectations of the trainees,
- conformity of the training methods to the training contents,
- adequacy and effectiveness of the time schedule,
- training location (comparisons between programmes based in firms and centre-based training programmes),
- possibilities for participants to influence the course of the training through participation in decision-making processes (empowerment approaches),

- comparisons between various training methods (individual and group tuition, team learning, etc.),
- examination of the learning atmosphere (supportive or cooperative climate in comparison with competitively orientated settings).

Especially the introduction of the ISO norms into the training sector resulted in a growing evaluation of process criteria. The implementation of the ISO standards assures that certain quality criteria are respected. The evaluation of quality aspects of training sometimes include an analysis of the subjective assessments made by the former trainees about three months after completion of the training course. This analysis is focused on to the actually acquired competences and the extent of their applicability and transfer at the workplace of the former trainees.

In Greece, the process quality of continuous vocational training is evaluated applying methods and criteria derived from the philosophy and the objectives of the participatory training approach that assigns to the individual trainees a leading role in the training process (Rogers, 1993). The criteria used for the assessment of the training quality are determined by the trainees themselves according to their subjectively perceived needs and perspectives. Here, the evaluation task consists of a primarily qualitative analysis of the subjective views expressed and the assessments made by the trainees.

Other qualitative examinations included in process-orientated evaluations focus on examinations of individual pathways into employment. Such approaches analysing the needs and integration pathways of unemployed persons use biographical analyses in combination with critical reviews of the existing training systems. Other quality aspects analysed in the frame of process-orientated evaluations comprise the kind of acquisition of skills, the quality of orientation and information of trainees, their level of qualification when starting with the vocational training and their level of skills when leaving the training system. Evaluations with a focus on pedagogical issues have analysed the relationships between contents and objectives of training courses, the principle of individualisation, or the importance of social assistance to trainees.

However, the lack of commonly accepted and applied quality criteria as well as the variations in the evaluation methods employed by the relevant studies limit objectively their conclusions to the individual training programmes considered and do not allow any further contribution to the quality of training programmes at a general level.

The more systemical approaches to process evaluation of VTPs are dealing with the relationships and the networking activities between the socio-economic actors (enterprises etc.) and the local training organisations. Such evaluations focus, for example, into the question if a job research assistance and a placement service is provided by the training organisation or if regular agreements are made between enterprises and the training body. They could analyse the changing roles of training centres, local authorities, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The challenge of

such evaluations consists in their possible contribution to overcome the institutional limitations and restrictions of the current training system.

However, when analysing all these different elements which in principle could influence the quality of training activities, it should not be forgotten that participation in highly adapted, individualised training circuits for certain individuals could also mean segregation from integration into the employment system.

5.4 Product-orientated evaluation

In the product-orientated evaluation of vocational training programmes it is the learning achievements of the participants which are of first and central importance, serving as they do as a criterion for goal achievement and hence also as a criterion for the examination of the effectiveness of the programme. Further criteria for product-orientated evaluations are the adequacy of the training, the effects of learning transfer into the working environment, the access rate into employment, and the quality of the job obtained.

5.4.1 Assessment of learning achievement

Traditionally the assessment of learning achievement takes place at the end of a vocational training measure through examination of the increase in knowledge of the participants. This is, for example, especially the case in apprenticeship programmes for young people. In this context largely objective forms of performance measurement are traditionally used. Usually the net training outcomes should be evaluated against the objectives set out at the beginning of the VTP. If this evaluation takes place at the end of the training, its results of course can no longer contribute formatively to the ongoing process but are at most of use to the following process generation. In order to influence the ongoing learning process via feedback, examinations of the participants' performance abilities have to be carried out at intervals or on a continual basis.

However, the measurements of learning achievement allow few conclusions to be drawn about the qualities in the training process which were particularly beneficial for the participants. And it is precisely the modern key qualifications such as aptitude for team work, creativity, or problem solving ability which can scarcely be measured by objective assessments.

For these reasons the qualitative analysis of the subjective significance of certain variables in the training process is playing an increasing role in process- and product-orientated research. In some of the countries involved in the present study a subjective assessment of certain aspects of the training process by the trainees has now become almost standard among VTP evaluations. The adequacy of the content and the suitability of the training process, for example, can be evaluated on the basis of the conclusions

yielded by a descriptive analysis of the subjective assessments made by the trainees. In principle surveys of participants can refer to all the variables brought into the training process by the programme's target group orientation, the situative conditions or the training personnel. However, most participant surveys are not differentiated enough to be able to encompass these variables in their entirety. Questions are often asked in a relatively general way regarding the participants' 'satisfaction' with certain conditions, for example with the quality of the teaching materials, the learning atmosphere or the degree to which it was possible for them to influence the design of the training process. In addition participants may be asked to give an assessment of their trainers.

A mixture of objective and subjective assessments is necessary, too, for analysing the drop-out rate, i.e. the number of participants who broke off early from their VTP or ended it unsuccessfully. To draw conclusions about the conditions which may have led to dropping out, a record has to made not only of the number of drop-outs but also of the reasons for premature termination. The results of these subjective assessments may allow conclusions to be drawn about specific conditions in the training process which are incompatible with the needs of the participants.

Although the participants' subjective assessments cannot provide the sole guideline for the design of future training processes, given that they sometimes merely reflect personal preferences and that objectively established aims, such as the fulfilment of the requirements of a specific vocational profile must also be achieved within the framework of VTP evaluations, these qualitative surveys do nevertheless provide important indicators for the adaptation of the VTPs to the needs and the requirements of the participants. The question which is important for any programme evaluation, namely whether and to what degree a programme has achieved its objectives, will certainly have to be answered primarily on the basis of objective data. And yet the subjective assessments of programme participants can make a comparatively greater contribution to the formative development of programmes and the modification and fine-tuning of subsequent generations of programmes in accordance with the requirements of their target groups.

5.4.2 Evaluation of the learning transfer

Another criterion for the measurement of the outcome or product of training processes has been introduced into the debate by examinations of learning transfer. In the context of vocational training, learning transfer is understood as the application of what has been learnt to new situations at the working place. Learning transfer research not only asks about the learning achievements attained through participation in a VTP; rather interest is concentrated on the usefulness for everyday vocational practice in the enterprise which emerges as a consequence of VTP participation. Research of this kind is most often undertaken in the field of in-house further education, which the larger firms usually organise themselves. Hence firms are not particularly interested in whether their employees attain objective learning achievements and which kind of (generally

recognised) certificates they acquire through participation in continuous training. Of far greater importance for the enterprises is the usefulness of what is learned and the degree to which it can be practically applied in everyday work.

As reported from Germany, Greece and Portugal, studies evaluating in-house training in big enterprises were using this outcome criterion by means of subjective evaluation methods (asking participants in further training whether they are able to use the knowledge they gained in their normal area of work) and by objective evaluation methods (assessment of the participant's way of working some time after completion of the training).

The main challenge for this type of evaluation studies seems to be the establishment of counter-factual conditions against which the net impact of training on the learning transfer is appraised. This element considered either by subjective or by objective evaluation methods remains problematic. In the cases where subjective evaluation methods are employed the counter-factual conditions are at most implied by the ex-trainees' subjective assessments concerning their transferred learning attributed to training that is however based on personal and not clearly specified criteria. On the other hand, in the cases where objective evaluation methods are employed the counter-factual situations are usually established by comparisons between before vs. after training and/or between training participants vs. non-participants demonstrated individual competencies. The credibility of the conclusions yielded by both comparisons is of course questionable since, not meeting the necessary empirical control requirements, they do not account for the influences of any other factors than training on the learning transfer demonstrated by the former VTP trainees.

5.4.3 Evaluation of employment prospects

In the following section it remains to be examined the extent to which further criteria for an outcome-orientated evaluation of VTP can be included in addition to learning achievement and learning transfer. This will mean examining whether and to what extent the question of the integration of the VTP participants into employment represents an additional criteria which can be used to measure the effects of VTPs.

Vocational training programmes do not only aim to generate a specific learning achievement but are also concerned with integrating their participants into the labour-market. In other words, the ideal objective of most VTPs is the achievement of full employment for its participants on the general labour-market as a result of their participation in the training programme. The achievement of this objective is examined in the context of product-orientated ex post evaluations. Generally speaking the 'outcome' criterion 'integration into employment after completion of the VTP' can be described by the following indicators:

- employment quota (proportion of persons entering normal, socially insured employment at least once during a given period),

- average duration of employment for these persons,
- employment quota at a given point in time (e.g. two or four years after completion of the VTP).

This methodological procedure to collect those data may also document the areas of the economy in which VTP participants have found work. In addition these data may be evaluated in a regionally differentiated way (according to certain regions). This enables conclusions to be drawn on employment prospects in specific vocational sectors and regions, and the data may be used also to direct the supply of VTP in specific vocational areas. If, for example, participants in VTPs in commercial professions remain over proportionately unemployed in a certain region, the supply of VTP in this area can be cut back through the regional public authorities.

It should be evident that as long as unemployment exists to a large and structural extent, not all VTP participants will be able to enter employment. Nevertheless, the employment integration quota is still taken by many of those responsible for labour-market policy as the main criteria for the evaluation of the success of VTPs.

On the other hand the explanatory value of the employment integration quota as an outcome criterion for VTPs has had to be increasingly restricted in the face of research which clearly and consistently showed the existence of a connection between employment integration quotas and rates of unemployment as an indicator of the situation on the labour-market at the time. The employment quotas after VTPs documented in numerous studies correlated closely with the state of the economy and the situation on the labour-market.

In addition it was also possible to detect differences between the various target groups, and to this extent it is also possible to determine factors for success in the context of the evaluation of labour-market policy measures. One of the main findings has been that identical training measures have led to different results concerning integration into employment for male and female trainees, for young trainees without working experiences or for experienced participants, for people with high and low qualifications. With higher skills the opportunities for getting a job are better, but there is no guarantee of finding a stable job quickly (Vanheerswynghels, 1996a). When participating in comparable VETs women not only have lower placement rates, but also more often gain part-time jobs or time-limited contracts. Thus there is evidence which shows that the greater the number of so-called risk factors or characteristics militating against placement (female, advanced age, low or inadequate qualifications, disability, etc.) in a given group, the lower the rate of employment integration.

The placement studies which have been reviewed produced some important methodological insights, too. It has been shown that the access rate to employment also depends on the timing of the participant survey following the end of the VTP. Given that the transition to employment seldom takes place directly after a VTP and that a certain time for looking for employment ought therefore to be taken into the calculation,

the surveys which are carried out a certain time after the end of the VTP produce a better rate of integration. To determine the long-term effects of vocational training additional follow-up studies can be conducted at several intervals.

5.4.4 Quality aspects of employment

Because the general, quantitative data on the employment rates allow relatively few practically-oriented conclusions to be drawn regarding the design of VTP, many outcome-orientated ex post studies have also begun including other, qualitative data on the (employment) situation of the participants. This is true for example for the ex post evaluations following on from the European Social Fund interventions. When inquiring into the quality of jobs obtained after completion of vocational training different criteria can be taken into consideration.

Important efforts can be seen to link the level of qualifications achieved in the VTP with the type of employment currently occupied. Compared to the research tradition in Anglo-Saxon countries, changes in remuneration are analysed very rarely. The level of qualification is not related to the level of remuneration but to the socio-professional status of the employee. These include publicly subsidised and non-subsidised employment, time-limited and not determined employment and job-seeking. In the surveys there have been distinctions made according to the following categories:

- employment situation:
  paid employment, self-employed, permanent/temporary contract, in publicly subsidised employment,
- non-employment situation:
  unemployed, participation in a new VTP, domestic work, military service or its equivalent in the civilian economy, retirement.

With regard to the quality of employment, further questions are asked about whether the employment is full or part-time, and whether the extent of the employment corresponds with the current requirements of the former trainee. In addition ex post surveys also ask questions to those in employment about the following characteristics of their workplace:

- employing firm active in which sector of the economy,
- size of the firm in which employed,
- current activity and its relation to the VTP attended (continuity or discontinuity),
- usefulness of the qualifications acquired for current work (standard of employment in relation to training, possibilities for learning transfer),
- current income,
- vocational prospects (as an indicator of satisfaction with current work),
- duration of unemployment between completion of VTP and commencing employment,
- way in which employment was found.

American and Swedish studies have more often quoted the increase in income achieved following attendance in a VTP as the only (objectively measurable) criterion for the evaluation of the qualitative effects of VTPs.

As a rule the follow-up data on the current employment situation are taken in relation to the data concerning the participants, so that it is possible to make differentiated statements about the which target groups have been particularly successful and which target groups still require further action on their behalf. It must be added here that in particular the more recent follow-up studies have not been content to limit themselves to quantitative methods of data collation on the whereabouts of the participants, but also make use of qualitative survey instruments in order to reconstruct VTP participants' biographical routes into employment or, as the case may be, into unemployment (cf. Plath et al 1995). From these data it is possible to draw conclusions about the fields of vocational training which could be selected more or less often in the future, in order to improve employment prospects for the VTP participants. In addition the information acquired in this way also illustrates which institutional forms of VTP are more, and which are less successful.

In part the ex post surveys of previous VTP participants also examined social integration criteria external to the work process. For example, a Portuguese evaluation study stated as a conclusion that the change in the structure of qualifications caused by training was almost meaningless, whereas the effects were very important on the social level. Evaluations including this kind of outcome data are analysing the following factors:

- type of leisure activities undertaken by the former trainee,
- quality of social relationships at and outside of the working place,
- type of accommodation before and after participating in the training,
- general level of satisfaction with life (before and after participation in training).

Such criteria are generally cited in order to draw comparisons between participants who have found employment following on from a VTP and those who have remained unemployed.

5.4.5 Longitudinal studies

Product-orientated evaluations could be ameliorated through longitudinal studies following the itineraries of the participants. Such studies could reveal the kind and length of phases which build the process of transition into employment. They aim to identify the individual pathways of trainees in a given period. Compared to traditional follow-up studies longitudinal studies use a more descriptive approach which is put into practice either by accompanying a certain panel over a period of time or by retrospective inquiries. Individuals can be grouped according to variables characterising their socio-demographic conditions, their societal situation or the degree of their vocational skills.

Longitudinal studies may be combined with a control group or comparison group approach. They may elucidate the role of different mechanisms or instruments which make their contributions to the pathways of the trainees into employment and thus may identify barriers or accelerators for biographical development.

6. Summary and conclusions: The dynamic relationship between process and product

Within the framework of this study, a certain number of evaluation studies was reviewed in five European countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Greece and Portugal). The purpose of this meta-analysis of evaluation studies was to analyse the methods and practices in the evaluation of quality aspects in vocational training programmes (VTPs). The reviewed studies had to do with VTPs for the unemployed and, on a lesser scale, programmes for the continuing training of employees. Most of these VTPs were at least co-financed from public funds.

Although relatively large number of evaluation studies has been conducted everywhere, not least thanks to the impetus from the programmes co-financed from European funds but several studies - a number of studies particularly in Portugal and Greece - did not necessarily lend themselves to closer analysis. In some cases the methods used were regarded as private know-how and were not, therefore, mentioned in the published studies. In others, results particularly those of a critical nature were not always published for reasons of opportuneness. A culture of transparent communication and open debate of the methods and results in the evaluation of VTPs is to be found only to a limited extent in most countries. The results of the evaluation of the further development of programme practice are also subject to constraints when it comes to their unbiased examination and utilisation. The critical discourse between researchers and programme evaluators on the one hand and the people responsible for the programmes in political and administrative circles on the other is in need of further development. Programme evaluation must not be reduced to an affirmative function for political and administrative circles. This task can only be properly undertaken if there is sufficient critical distance, otherwise the application-related potential of evaluation to improve the quality of VTPs will not be fully tapped.

In terms of methods the reviewed evaluation studies varied considerably. They are still very far from using comparable methods. This has firstly to do with the subject of the studies and the many different variables which influence the course and the results of VTPs. Secondly, the methodological heterogeneity also has to do with the fact that a generally accepted, uniform inventory of methods for the evaluation of VTPs has only gradually emerged in the last few years.

If we examine this development more closely, we can initially distinguish between two different and indeed contradictory types of evaluation. The first has its roots in university tradition and is frequently conducted in this institutional environment. It is called applied social sciences. It is linked to major ambitions in respect of adhering to scientific standards, which explains why evaluation of this kind is often criticised for being too removed from practice. The second type of evaluation stems from management and the implementations of programmes. In this case the training function is to the fore. Evaluation is viewed as an integral part of the management of training programmes and

is therefore less interested in generally valid results than in direct improvements to the programme.

In order to systematically classify the many diverse methodological approaches identified during the meta-analysis of VTP evaluations and, at the same time, to structure the evaluation field of this study, use was made of the CIPP model of Stufflebeam et al (1988). Based on this, a distinction was made between context evaluations, process-orientated and product-orientated evaluations.

Product-orientated evaluations are designed to measure the gap between certain objectives of the programme and the results or products generated in the course of the programme. In projected/actual comparisons, a distinction is made between the target objectives and the products generated. A high degree of goal achievement in this evaluation approach is equated with a high standard in the reviewed VTPs. In an ideal situation the objectives are operationalised prior to commencement of the programme in terms of quantity, which means that the degree of goal achievement can be clearly measured later on. Such operationalised objectives may be the number of trainees from specific target groups (e.g. proportion of men and women) who can be reached by a VTP. Objectives of this kind can describe the skills and formal qualifications to be obtained by the trainees in the course of the programme and they can anticipate the employment rates which the trainees are to achieve on completion of that programme. Accordingly, a distinction will be made in respect of the products of VTPs between output (number and type of people involved), results (number and type of qualifications obtained) and outcome (direct employment effects of the programme).

Process-orientated evaluations are concerned with the implementation of the programme itself, with the procedures, modes, agreements, conflicts, negotiations, arrangements, translations which are involved during the practical course of VTPs and which crop up between the players involved. Process-orientated evaluations, therefore, have to do with the organisation and the procedures of VTPs. By way of tradition, process-orientated evaluations are rather formatively orientated and it is, therefore, very difficult to compare their methods and results. However, with the increasing introduction of quality standards, e.g. ISO standards, the methods of process evaluation have been placed on a more uniform foundation since compliance with specific organisational and procedural standards is increasingly viewed as a guarantee for the quality of training programmes.

Context evaluations have to do with the framework conditions under which VTPs are run. This means economic, legal and social apsects on the social macro level as well as institutional and organisational aspects on the meso and micro levels of the promoter organisation. More or less extensive analyses of the context of VTPs are almost always an integral part of each evaluation irrespective of whether this is a process- or production-orientated approach. However, there are also context evaluations which are independent of the product and process. Some examples are prospective analyses of the regional development of labour demand or the need for specific occupational

qualifications in specific branches and sectors (agriculture, shipbuilding, textiles, etc.). Analyses to determine the qualification requirements and training needs of specific target groups (e.g. disadvantaged young people, migrant workers) also come into this category of evaluation studies.

The meta-analysis of VTP evaluation studies conducted in five European countries clearly illustrated that there is a lack of relevant research in respect of the overall vocational training programme cycle. There are scarcely any studies which look at the links between the context, process and product of VTPs. There are many studies focusing on single elements from this cycle. There are, for example, studies on training needs. There are other studies which are concerned with the organisation of vocational training, and there are studies on the integration of trainees into employment, but only few of them cover the whole VTP cycle with its various elements.

The context evaluations examined within the framework of this study illustrate that only rarely have there been successful attempts to look at the overall situation involving the 'objective' training needs and the subjective training requirements of the potential trainees. In the results of context evaluation on the macro level, training needs are frequently defined solely in terms of the (future) demand on the labour-market. Context evaluations, which focus on the initial social conditions and the subjective training of specific target groups, therefore, more frequently neglect the objective trends on the labour-market. The result is that VTPs are primarily analysed in terms of their suitability for specific target groups. One exception are evaluations of in-company continuing training programmes of large companies which systematically endeavour, both in the design of training but also in the evaluation of the results, to consider the interrelations between the objective requirements of the in-company work processes and the subjective interests and experiences of the employees.

In respect of process-orientated approaches there are hardly any variables, whether influenced by the composition of the participants, dependent on the process of the training courses, or the qualifications of the training personnel, which have not been examined in the VTP evaluations. However, many of these important process variables have not been analysed in a systematic way. This, of course, reduces the impact and the general validity of the results of such studies. In process-orientated evaluations there is a certain tendency to include the participants' own subjective perspectives in the evaluation of the process and this indeed can provide important pointers towards the qualitative modifications of VTPs. This tendency should not, however, hide the fact that analyses on the subjective needs and motivations of the participants still receive too little attention in the planning of vocational training programmes.

One overall finding of this study is that the fields of vocational training research and labour market policy research are still distinctly isolated from each other. This has to do with the fact that both prefer different evaluation approaches. The former is primarily orientated towards the evaluation of the training process and its internal quality criteria, whereas products like the employment rate of the trainees are ignored, if not even

intentionally rejected as quality indicators. Training research is interested in the process but not at all in the product. By contrast, for labour-market policy research it is integration into employment which enjoys pride of place. In terms of labour-market policy discourse, the documentation of the employment situation of participants attending a VTP is both a common practice and an uncontested criterion for evaluating the outcome of VTPs. For labour-market policy research the employment rate is the dominant indicator of quality. This indicator is so dominant that within the framework of labour-market policy research the learning achievements of the trainees are sometimes ignored although this is another clearly product-orientated quality indicator for VTPs. Research into the training process is largely excluded from labour-market policy ex-post evaluations.

With regard to the CIPP model, the dynamic relationship between process and product has yet to be adequately researched. In product-orientated labour-market policy evaluations it is not only the situational conditions of the training process which have continuously been ignored in terms of their effects on the employment situation. The VTP participants' own subjective assessments, which are becoming increasingly significant in the training process research and quality management and which have already proven their worth, are often not taken into consideration when evaluating the employment integration quota. The same applies to the insights gained through the learning transfer research, which are given far too little attention both in the field of training process research and in the labour-market policy debate.

Process-orientated evaluations are focused on the internal quality dimension of vocational training, which can be analysed using different criteria. These criteria could be a set of pre-formulated standards (like the ISO standards), or the demands of the target groups as well as the demands of the enterprises. The standards define the procedures to be followed and this approach implicitly supposes that following the procedures will guarantee the quality of the programme. Following the logic of evaluation approaches, these quality elements naturally contribute to achieving the objectives and, by extension, the products of VTPs. Whatever criteria are used, however, an evaluation of vocational training programmes which is not interested in the placement rates of the trainees will not be satisfactory. Otherwise, a programme could be qualified as excellent even if only one single trainee managed to find a job on completion of that course.

Hence, information on the whereabouts of former VTP participants must increasingly be registered including qualitative employment or unemployment criteria and the personal variables of the participants. The advantage of the employment rate as an indicator of quality is that it can be measured and it is general enough for it to be used to measure very different training policies. However, sometimes the placement rate is attributed mechanically to the training programme, although there might by no causal link between the successful completion of training and the later job. It is the specific weakness of product-orientated labour-market research that its main indicator for quality, the placement rate, does not permit a distinction as to which variables have influenced access to employment by which degree.

A high placement rate is not in itself an indicator of quality; nor is a low placement rate the indicator of low standards. The well-known statement by Tanguy (1986) which considers the relationship between vocational training and employment to be '*introuvable*' (cannot be found) is all too superficial. In individual cases the relationship between training and employment is not necessarily a causal one but this does not change anything about the general plausibility of the connection.

So it is indeed possible and common practice in evaluation research to compare the employment indicator with the results of different training courses and thus to build up a hierarchy between more and less effective measures. In the evaluation studies reviewed comparisons were also made of the employment rates of various target groups with the general tendencies on the labour-market. Within the framework of these comparative analyses, it was possible to identify the disadvantages facing women on entering employment on completion of VTPs (cf. Seyfried, Bühler, 1995). Furthermore, placement rates are used as indicators of necessary adjustments to policies and the design of VET programmes taking into account the developments in the labour-markets.

Nevertheless, given the weaknesses in respect of the causality problem, it is not at all satisfying from a scientific point of view to use the placement rate as the single indicator for the effectiveness or for the classification of different training measures as more or less successful. In scientific research different approaches have been developed to escape from the causality trap, one of which is the establishment of a control group design. Another possibility is the creation of a comparison group through a statistical regression analysis.

Although the findings of the reviewed studies stress the importance of process-orientated evaluations, the existence of quality criteria in the training process cannot be seen as an expression of quality in itself but only because these quality aspects are supposed to improve the objectives of the training programme concerned. Therefore, process-orientated and product-orientated evaluations should not be seen as alternatives but as additional approaches. A coherent approach to VTP evaluation must overcome the gaps found between 'process' and 'product'. For the future there needs to be greater convergence between the debates on training policy and labour-market policy, as well as greater efforts on all sides into coordinating coherent research approaches with consideration being given to process-orientated and product-orientated indicators of quality.

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Prof. Dr. Erwin Seyfried

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Evaluation of quality aspects in vocational training programmes

Synthesis report

The on-going worldwide technological and economic changes as well as persisting unemployment are at the origin of the multiplication of vocational training programmes in recent years. This extraordinary expansion of the VET sector seems to reach its limits though, due to restricted public funding in the EU Member States. Therefore questions arise as to which effects and under which conditions certain programmes produce.
In other words, programmes are evaluated on their effectiveness. The methods of evaluation as used in various countries become in their turn object of investigation, in an attempt to improve them.
We hope that this publication contributes to this effort and to the development of a common culture of vocational training programme evaluations through learning from one another.

Prof. Dr Erwin Seyfried

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